

Low Income, High Potential: Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students in Urban Schools

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Opening Quickwrite:

- Part 1: On the half sheet of paper at your seat, take 2 minutes and draw in detail what you think a typical ALG student “looks” like. You may include symbols to represent characteristics.

Opening Quickwrite

- Part 2: On the same drawing you just did, take an additional 2 minutes and add in at least 3 more details to your drawing that describe what a student coming from poverty “looks” like. You may include symbols to represent characteristics.
- As an AIG Facilitator in a building which primarily serves students out of poverty, these are the students I teach. This is their story.

Understanding the “Excellence Gap”

- The Jack Cooke Foundation, a non-profit who work to obtain equal opportunities for low-income, high ability students all over the country, has coined the term “Excellence Gap” to describe what is happening to AIG students in low income areas.
- “The excellence gap refers to the disparity in the percent of low-income versus higher-income students who reach advanced levels of academic performance. The ‘gap’ appears in elementary school and continues as students move through middle school, high school, college and beyond.”

Source: <http://www.excellencegap.org/what-is-the-excellence-gap/>

Understanding the “Excellence Gap”

- As of October 2015...
 - 51% of all students across the US are coming from low-income environments
 - Only 56% of lower-income students maintain their status as high achievers in reading by 5th grade, versus 69% of higher-income students
 - While 25% of high-achieving, lower income students fall out of the top academic quartile in math in high school, only 16% of high-achieving upper income students do so

Source: <http://www.excellencegap.org/what-is-the-excellence-gap/>

How did we get here?

- So much attention has been paid to the “Achievement Gap” that little to none has been paid to the “Excellence Gap,” which has created a population of AIG learners who are falling through the cracks.
- Ignoring or believing that the “AIG students will be fine” is common across schools who are struggling to meet proficiency as a building.
- Focus is placed on the bulk of the population, and if that bulk is multiple grade levels behind, interventions and resources go to that population.

Fighting the Excellence Gap at Neal: Creating an AIG Elective

- The class began with the support from a principal who believes in balance: if you put interventions in place for one ability level, you must do it for the other. My AIG students were the other side of that formula.
- The class was created based on 10 years experience of teaching ELA, teaching low-income students, and teaching gifted students.
- The class has a flexible curriculum – Students drive what we do. We always begin with a conversation on AIG identity.

Defining Identity: What does it mean to be AIG?



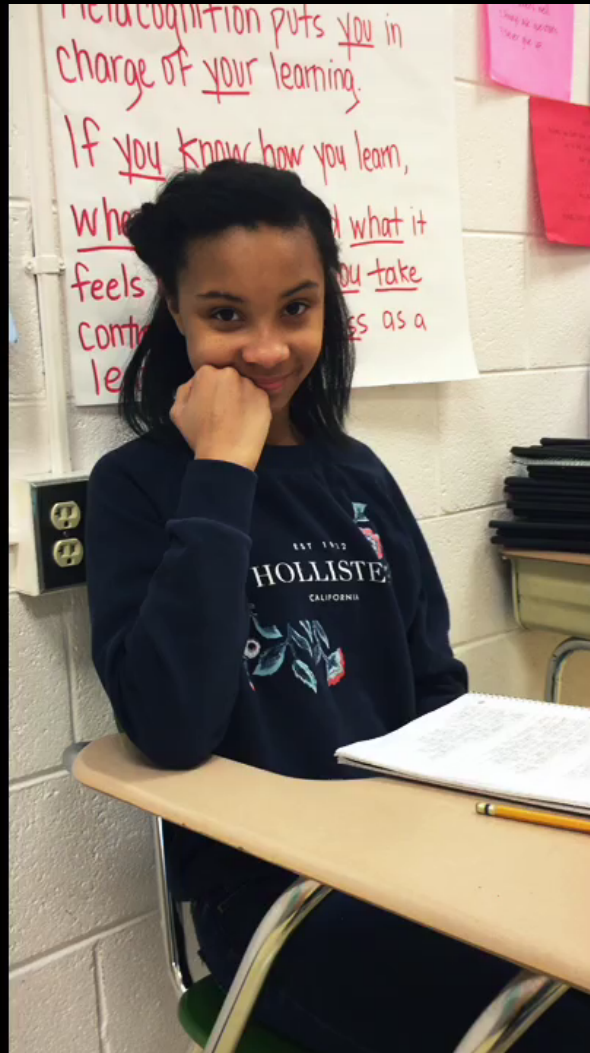
Metacognitive Skill Development

- Once students owned and understood their unique identity as AIG students at Neal, it was important to me to teach them Metacognitive skills – or ways they could learn to be in charge of their thinking and learning.
- Focus Assignments-
 - Learning Logs and Weekly Conferences
 - Bloom's Taxonomy Graphic Organizers

AIG Elective Data Dive

- Gifted students possess the capacity to own and control their own data- if they are taught how.
- The Data Dive has students look at their own data, analyze trends over time, and create SMART Goals to reverse or manage those trends.
- This activity boosts Metacognitive skill development and increases confidence, thus allowing students to feel in control of their test scores for the first time in their lives.

AIG Elective Data Dive



Independent Study

- Research in Gifted Education has shown for years that allowing a high ability student to research and learn about a topic that genuinely interests them is beneficial.
- AIG Elective devotes a minimum of one day per week to Independent Study.
- Topics are student-selected, sources are student-selected, and products are entirely student-produced.
- Students were required to conference with me, but they assessed themselves and held themselves to the guidelines and standards they set – after all, they built their own rubric.
- All Independent Studies had a minimum of three sources and a maximum of five. Students were encouraged to find a “human source.”
- At the close of the semester, we hosted Independent Study Symposium, where students presented projects to an authentic audience of teachers, parents, students, and community stakeholders.

Independent Study



Independent Study Human Source: Carolina Tiger Rescue



Independent Study Human Source: Ghost Hunters



AIG Elective: Additional Units of Study

- In addition to the Independent Study which runs the length of the semester, students participate in units on the following topics:
 - Leadership & the role of Emotional Intelligence: Students interview 3 leaders and analyze their leadership skill set as well as their Emotional Intelligence skill set. Then, they craft an essay that shares the analysis and then utilizes it to select the leader who they feel has had the greatest impact on them as an AIG student.
*See handout!
 - Current Event Socratic Seminar: Students select an article weekly and utilize their Bloom's question and answer skills to have a discussion they lead themselves and assess themselves.
 - Documentary Film Analysis: Students view and utilize Bloom's question and answer skills to analyze a documentary film called "If you Build It." This leads us into our final unit on Service Learning.

Service Learning

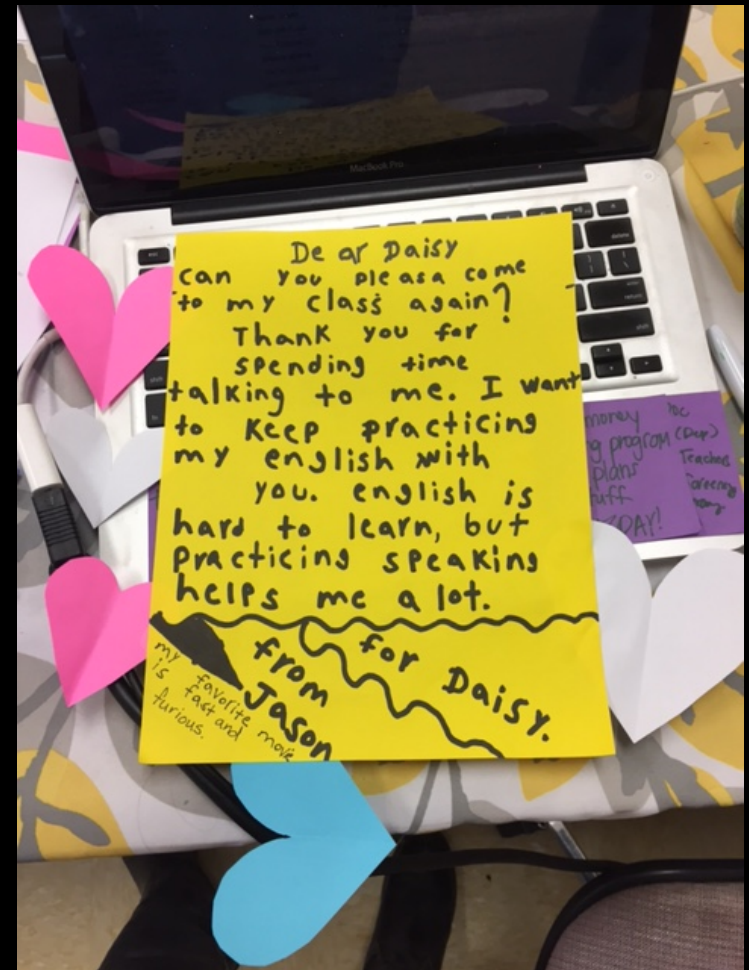
- Students participate in the AIG Elective Day of Service as the last major assignment of the class for the semester.
- The Day of Service is intended to be a culminating activity that showcases the leadership and emotional intelligence skills gained over the semester.
- Student projects were created by students based on needs they saw around the school.

AIG Elective Day of Service

- A few sample projects:
 - ESL Conversation Partners
 - Lost & Found Organization
 - Cafeteria Clean Up
 - Clothing Donation
 - 6th Grade Tutors



AIG Elective Day of Service



Dear Daisy
Can you please come
to my class again?
Thank you for
spending time
talking to me. I want
to keep practicing
my English with
you. English is
hard to learn, but
practicing speaking
helps me a lot.

from Jason
for Daisy.

Where do we go from here?

- The Excellence Gap was created over time. It won't be stopped in one semester. Have the patience to commit to building something that is truly driven by AIG students and is for AIG students. It begins with a proposal!
- Prioritize needs based on how heavily students are impacted. There will always be more to do – more paperwork, more meetings.
- Questions?

Resources and Contact Information

- Digital copies of all handouts available on the NCAGT website!
 - If there's anything you can't find that you'd like to see, just e-mail me!
- Email me directly: ashley.solesbee@dpsnc.net
- Find me at the conference!